DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 164 EC 122 406

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TITLE	Sharing Centers: An Overview of the Component and Curriculum Developed by the Macomb 0-3 Regional Project. Baby Buggy Paper No. 122. The Sharing Center Kit Concept. Baby Buggy Paper No. 123.
INSTITUTION	Western Illinois Univ., Macomb.
SPONS AGENCY	Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
BUREAU NO	44AH50417: 444BH80067
PUB DATE	Mar 79
GRANT	G007500234: G007801853
NOTE	9p.: For related information, see EC 122 401-416.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Early Childhood Education: *Handicapped Children: Home Programs: *Infancy: *Learning Activities: Parent Education: Program Development
IDENTIFIERS	At Risk (for Handicap): Illinois: *Macomb 0 3 Regional Project

ABSTRACT

The booklet discusses the concepts of sharing centers and sharing center kits in the Macomb (Illinois) 0-3 Regional Project, a rural home based program to serve rural handicapped and high risk infants and toddlers. It is explained that sharing centers provide opportunities for parents to share experiences and learn new approaches to working with their children. Sharing center kits (collections of gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, sensory, and language materials) are described. (CL)

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Sharing
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March, 1979

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USOE-BEH Grant No. G00-75-00234 Project No. 44 AH 50417

Primary emphasis in the Macomb 0-3 Regional Project is placed on working with parents to help them to become more effective in dealing with their children, ages birth to three, who have special needs. The rural service delivery model developed by the Macomb 0-3 Regional Project is centered around the weekly home visit. In addition to the home visit, Project families may also participate in sharing centers, a component which involves both parents and/or primary caretakers and their children. Sharing Centers function as an important service delivery strategy in the home-based rural program: but they can also function as a transitional step between home and center based programming for both child and parent. In a sense, the sharing center is one form of provision of mainstreaming, a least restrictive environment.

As their name implies, sharing centers are places where parents and their youngsters come together to share experiences, activities, and ideas for mutual growth. Sharing centers contain elements of a parent cooperative nursery school. For parents, the sharing center is a place to learn about new activities, new and effective ways to deal with children, to watch other adults working with children, and to deal with common problems or unique situations that occur in a specific family. The sharing centers provide a supportive and comfortable atmosphere for parents where they can acquire new skills and knowledge. In rural communities, it is often difficult for parents to get together, even though they would like to. Sharing centers fill that need.

For children, the sharing center is a place where they can be with other children and adults. The child can watch other children doing a variety of different things (painting boxes, stacking blocks, manipulating textured balls, trying pudding painting) or the child can do those things himself. Since much of the young child's time is spent observing other people, a great deal is learned in the observational learning situation. Project children, ranging in age from birth to three, and their siblings, ranging in age from birth to six, are involved in sharing centers, along with typical children from birth to three years of age.

Sharing centers can be held in a home, in a church, in a community building, or outside in a yard, park, or even in a swimming pool. Sharing centers are physically arranged using the Montessori principle of the prepared environment. Space and materials are planned so that the child can learn from the environment. Interesting and novel materials are attractively arranged so that they are appealing and stimulating to the child. Where possible materials are self-correcting; feedback comes from the objects and materials themselves. Such an environment is a place for the development of physical knowledge (according to Piagetian theory.)

Sharing center objectives result from a major goal: to plan appropriate activities to meet the needs of all the children participating within the total conceptual framework of sharing centers. In order to meet such a goal, information and curriculum activities from home visits, the Piagetian framework, and the Project's core curriculum behaviors are integrated into a functioning whole.

However, the concept of sharing centers, as well as use of the suggested activities, can be adapted for use in programs whose basic philosophy differs from that of the Macomb 0-3 Project. Conditions for learning activites can be more structured in terms of adult direction, or in structuring activities (i.e., in sequential steps.) Other activities can be added,

depending upon the needs of particular children.

Sharing center activities are planned for children of varying developmental levels and ages. It is assumed that even the severely handicapped child progresses through some of the same developmental stages as do "typical" children, but at a slower rate. Activities were developed to be used with children of varying developmental levels. Children at different developmental levels will respond with different behaviors. Most of the children in a 0-3 project are in the sensorimotor stage of development; therefore, most of the activities have a motoric base.

Activities include those planned for gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, and self-help skills. Language activities are a part of the sharing center at all times, and are integrated with all the other activities. Self-help skills, including feeding, are also integrated into other activities. Several types of activities are included: some that mothers are not likely to do at home and some which can be done using objects easily found in a home.

During the sharing center, time is set aside when parents can talk about their special needs, or get new information (a parent study group.) Snack time is often a good time for such discussions. Volunteers, college students in training, or other members of the Macomb 0-3 staff work with children while parents are involved in study groups.

When parents are involved in planning an activity, those parents are contacted by the CDS to offer help with planning or to determine materials needed for the activity. Parents are shown how to become more and more skillful in setting up and planning activities. Ultimately, parents may be able to take over the entire sharing center, with the CDS functioning as a consultant.

Have Wagon: Will Travel (Baby Buggy Book #1) is a curriculum for sharing centers developed by the Macomb 0-3 Regional Project. It contains information on initiating, planning, and conducting sharing centers for handicapped and delayed infants and toddlers. The 117-page book contains illustrations and pictures, activities, snack ideas, supplier list, and both theoretical and practical background information about sharing centers.

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BABY BUGGY PAPER NO. [illegible]

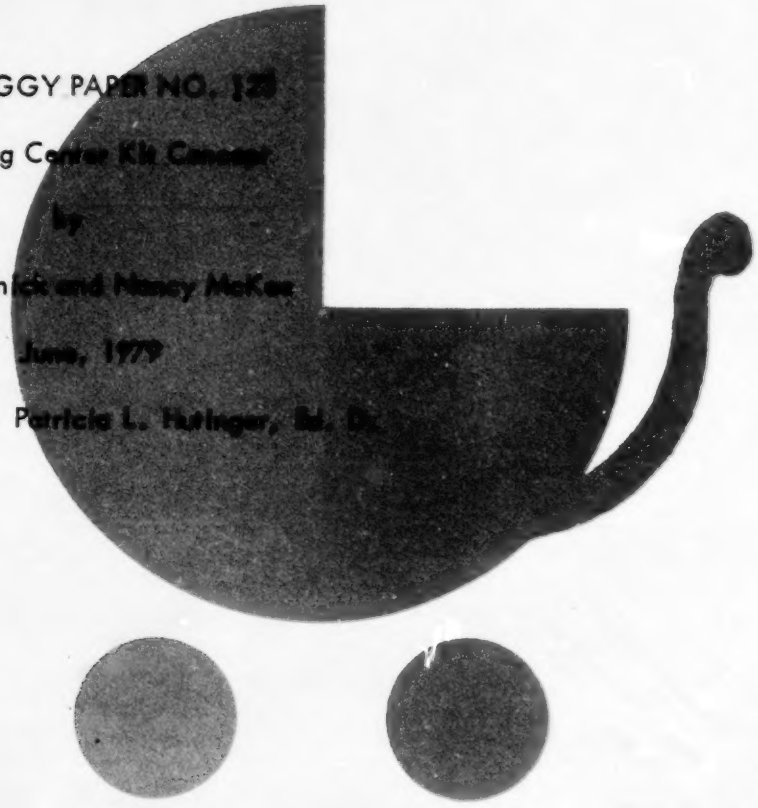
The Sharing Center Kit Concept

by

Diana Bartnick and Nancy McKee

June, 1979

Project Director: Patricia L. Hutinger, Ed. D.



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USOE-BEH Grant No. G00-78-01853 Project No. 444-BH 80067

Sharing centers, a component of the Macomb 0-3 Regional Project, are places for parents and children to interact and share ideas, activities, and experiences for mutual growth. They involve handicapped and delayed young children and their parents, siblings, and typical children and their parents.

In rural communities, it is often difficult for parents to get together. Sharing centers are conducted in homes, churches, or community buildings which are located in geographical areas accessible to as many Project families as possible. It is not always possible to store materials and toys in church or community rooms where space has been donated for weekly or bi-weekly sharing centers. Also, these same toys and materials are constantly being called upon for use by the staff of a home-based project for weekly home visits. Thus, materials for conducting the sharing centers have to be transported for each session.

In order to meet the needs of the Child Development Specialists (CDSs) in planning and conducting sharing centers in a rural setting and in alternating locations, the staff of the Macomb 0-3 Project developed the "kit concept." Provision of six different well-planned, portable kits for sharing centers which are stored in the office (any central location would do) proved to be a boon to busy staff members in occasional need of a pre-packaged and pre-planned sharing center.

The areas of development covered in each sharing center kit are gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, sensory and language. Necessary materials are included which enable the CDS to hold an entire sharing center with a variety of activities for a heterogeneous group of children and their parents. (Supplies for snacktime need to be added for each session.) Activities are developed to be used with children of varying developmental levels and ages. As most of the children in an infant project are in the sensorimotor stage of development, the majority of the activities have a motoric base.

Sharing center kits are packaged in cardboard storage boxes, 12½" wide x 24" long x 11½" deep. The boxes allow sufficient room for toys and materials, and at the same time can be conveniently stored within a main office or central location. Each box is numbered and its contents are labeled on the outside for quick reference and access. A typical kit contains two or three boxes of equipment which can be transported the morning of the scheduled sharing center or picked up a day or two in advance and stored in the CDS's vehicle to be set up in a remote rural setting the day of the sharing center.

The sharing center kits contain many items ordered through supply companies and business sites. (The purchasing team discovered that many items could be purchased more reasonably through discount houses, though billing procedures might prove to be a problem.) The kits contain a variety of materials, including toys, large building blocks, paint, dropcloths, and paper towels. The toys purchased for the kits are high quality, strong and bought for many children to use and enjoy. The multi purposefulness of these toys is important, but durability is imperative. Development of a single kit, assuming purchase of all items, varies in cost according to locale and manufacturers' list prices. Each kit has different items so costs would vary accordingly. For the purpose of this paper, Sharing Center Kit #1 would cost approximately $85.00 based on 1978 consumer prices. One kit (#6) was made up of inexpensive equipment and homemade toys. A kit of this type can be assembled by parents as well as teachers; a simple toy gathering/making session can be

accomplished in several hours. This type of kit, obviously, is the least expensive type to replicate.

A sample of a sharing center kit follows. Suggested activities are referenced to Have Wagon: Will Travel, the sharing center curriculum produced by the Macomb 0-3 Project. Information about all six sharing center kits is also available upon request at a cost of $1.00.

Sample:

SHARING CENTER KIT #1

Activities have been primarily categorized under the major headings of gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, sensory, and language; however, each activity represents a blending of many areas.

Gross Motor

Materials	Objectives	*Reference in Book
mirror w/blanket	raises head recognizes own image explores self plays peek-a-boo	Where Am I? Look at Me
foam	manipulates the shapes acquires expectations about the weight of shapes stacks shapes interacts with other people maintains balance of stacked boxes	Surprise Blocks Boxes Soft & Light Block Drops

Fine Motor

crayons paper	holds crayons marks on paper	

Cognitive

flashlight large blanket quilt	tracks the light	Night Light

Sensory

carpet squares	feels textures of the carpet squares walks, crawls, jumps on carpet squares	Carpet Squares

Sensory, cont.

Materials	Objectives	*Reference in Book
music box record player	attends to sounds	
bowls cups spoon grains (rice, barley, cornmeal, popcorn)	feels the textures of the grains discriminates size difference between grains observes colors of the grains explores the quantity relationships of full and empty pours the grains	Corn & Pans
squeeze toys	grasps objects attends to sound	Grasping Tracking

Language

books	views pictures names objects turns pages

* related activities in Have Wagon: Will Travel curriculum book

Sharing Center Kit #1 - 3 boxes

Contents:

1	Have Wagon: Will Travel book
1	mirror with attached blanket
2	flashlights
1	large quilt
6	bowls with lids
7	carpet squares
1	bag foam shapes
1	set graduated cups
2	sets measuring spoons, scoop, funnel
1	music box record player
4	squeeze toys
3	packages crayons
1	package drawing paper
1	bolster
3	containers of grains
2	drop cloths
1	container Wet Ones
1	roll paper towels
3	books
2	tin pans

Summary:

Sharing center kits, as described above in some detail, are a practical means of gathering together related activities necessary for conducting an effective sharing center for Project children, their parents, siblings, and typical children and their parents. The kits are convenient transportable "instant sharing centers." Child Development Specialists do not rely solely on the kits, however, saving them for those weeks when neither time nor energy allows them to plan and gather materials for a scheduled sharing center. The usual practice is for the Child Development Specialist to plan activities in a variety of areas, concentrating on meeting the needs of the Project children as identified in their individual bi-yearly goals.